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PIRKE ABOTH; or, SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS.

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Translated from the Hebrew Edition of Prof. H. L. Strack, of Berlin, Germany.

[What is included in brackets is by the translator.]

CHAPTER III.

1. Akabya,¹ the son of Mahalalel, said: Consider three things and thou wilt not be led into transgression; bear in mind whence thou hast come, and whither thou art going, and before whom thou must be ready² to render³ judgment and account. Whence hast thou come? from a polluting substance; and whither art thou going? to a place of dust, vermin and worms;⁴ and before whom hast thou to render judgment and account?⁵ before the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he!

2a. Rabbi Chanina,⁶ suffragan⁷ of the priests, said: Pray for the peace of the government;⁸ for, were it not for the fear of it, man would devour his fellow man alive.

2b. Rabbi Chanina,⁹ the son of Teradyon, said: Two persons sitting together and are holding no conversation about the law, such is an assembly of scorners; for it is said,¹⁰ "Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful;" but when two persons are sitting together, and are holding converse about the law, the divine presence¹¹ rests in their midst; for it is said,¹² "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." This refers to two; but suppose only one is sitting engaged in the study of the law, will the Holy One (blessed be he!) appoint him a reward? (certainly), for it is said, "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him."¹³

¹ He belongs to the oldest authorities whose names are given, probably contemporaneous with Gamaliel I.

² עתיד Bibl. *ready*; in later Hebrew, to denote what shall certainly come to pass in the future.

³ לית, also iv., 10-22; v., 1. The verbs ל"פ and ל"פ form, in the Mishna, the infinitive with ל, without ת, as ל"פ, ל"פ, ל"פ.

⁴ [Vermin and worms, a *ἐν δὲ δυνάμει*, worms of all kinds.]

⁵ [Cf. Matt. xii., 36; xviii., 23; Heb. ix., 27.]

⁶ Another reading is Hananya.

⁷ In the Bible only the plural סוֹדֵי, "suffragans of the priests." He must have lived before the destruction of the temple. From the fact that Chanina is always mentioned with that title, we may infer, with certainty, that he was the last incumbent of that office.

⁸ 1 Tim. ii., 1, 2; Jer. xxix., 7.

⁹ Another reading is Hananya. His daughter was the famous Berurya, wife of Rabbi Meir. [The Talmud contains many stories concerning her. Her end was tragic. She had ridiculed the saying of the Rabbis, that women were light minded. "By thy life," said her husband, "thou wilt one day admit the truth of their assertion." By his order, one of his disciples laid a snare for her, into which she fell at last; and the consequence was, that she strangled herself.]

¹⁰ It is to be observed that the Talmud, in quoting Scripture, mostly cites only a few words, and not the whole verse (section), and leaves it to the hearer (reader) to supplement the words necessary for the argument. Thus, here, the first two verses of the First Psalm are used as an argument.

¹¹ שְׁכִינָה, cf. Weber, *Altsynagog. Theologic*, p. 179 sq.

¹² Mal. iii., 16.

¹³ Lam. iii., 28.

3. Rabbi Simon¹ said: Three who have eaten at the same table and have not discoursed on the words of the law thereat, are to be considered as if they had eaten of the sacrifices to the dead;² for it is said,³ "All tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." But three who have eaten at the same table and have discoursed on the words of the law thereat, are to be considered as if they had eaten of the table of the Lord; for it is said,⁴ "And he said unto me, this is the table that is before the Lord."

4. Rabbi Chanina,⁵ the son of Hachinai, said: He who is wakeful in the night, and walketh on the highway by himself, and giveth his heart to vanity, such an one is guilty against his soul.

5. Rabbi Nehunjah,⁶ the son of Ha-kanah, said: Everyone who takes upon himself the yoke of the law, the yoke of the powers that be is removed from him, as well as the yoke of conventional manners. But he who casts off from himself the yoke of the law, then the yoke of the powers that be, as well as that of conventional manners, is laid upon him.

6. Rabbi Halaphta,⁷ the son of Dosa, of Cephah Hananyah,⁸ said: Ten who sit and are engaged in discoursing on the law, the divine presence rests in their midst; for it is said,⁹ "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty." Suppose only five are assembled, (is it the same as with ten? Yes); for it is said,¹⁰ "He hath founded his troop in the earth." And suppose only three (are assembled, it is the same); for it is said,¹¹ "He judgeth among the gods." Is it so with two? (Yes), for it is said,¹² "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." And is this the case with one? (Yes), for it is said,¹³ "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee."

7a. Rabbi Eleazar, of Bartotha,¹⁴ said: Give to him¹⁵ of his own; for thou and what thou hast are his, and thus it is said¹⁶ by David,¹⁷ "For all things are from thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

¹ Simon ben Yochai (cf. also iv., 13b; vi., 7), famous pupil of R. Aqiba. For a long time he was regarded as the author of the *Sohar*, which was, however, composed in the second half of the thirteenth century, by Moses ben Shemtobde Leon. [Cf. Pick arts. *Simon ben Yochai*, in McClintock & Strong's Cyclop., ix., p. 757; also the art. *Moses de Leon*, *ibid.*, vi., p. 689.]

² See Ps. cvi., 28. [Cf. Num. xxv., 2.]

³ Isa. xxviii., 8. The word "place," במקום, means here "God."

⁴ Ezek. xli., 22.

⁵ A pupil of Rabbi Aqiba.

⁶ Teacher of Ismael, a cotemporary with Aqiba. [Cf. Pick, art. *Nechunjah ben Ha-Kanah*, in McClintock and Strong's Cyclop. s. v.]

⁷ A cotemporary with Hanina ben Teradyon. § 2b.

⁸ A place in Galilee. Cf. Ad. Neubauer, *La géographie du Talmud*, Paris, 1868, p. 178, 22b.

⁹ Ps. lxxxii., 1. That ten are necessary to form a congregation (עֵדוּת) is inferred from Num. xiv., 27 [where the ten spies are called עֵדֵי]. Cf. also *Megilla*, fol. 23, col. 2.

¹⁰ Amos vi., 9.

¹¹ Ps. lxxxii., 1. אֱלֹהִים are judges. Three belong at least to a court.

¹² Mal. iii., 16.

¹³ Exod. xx., 24.

¹⁴ According to I. Schwarz, *Das heilige Land* (Frankfort a. M. 1852), p. 161, in Upper Galilee.

¹⁵ i. e., God.

¹⁶ Supply "in the scripture." On the mode of Talmudic quotation cf. W. Surenhusius *Βιβλος καταλλαγής*. Amst., 1713. [Also Pick, art. *Quotations of the Old Testament in the Talmud*, McClintock and Strong's Cyclop. s. v.] The passage referred to here is from 1 Chron. xxix., 14.

¹⁷ In a similar way Jonah iii., 10 is quoted in *Thaanthyoth*, II., 1, by נִנְוֶה נִנְוֶה נִנְוֶה [“concerning the men of Nineveh it is said”]. Cf. Rom. xi., 2, ἐν Ἰλίου τί λέγει ἡ γραφή;

7b. Rabbi Jacob¹ said: He who is walking on the way musing (on the law), and pauses in his musing, and says, How beautiful is this tree! how beautiful is this farm!—is, according to the Scripture, worthy of death.

8. Rabbi Dōsetai,² the son of Janai,³ said, in the name of Rabbi Meïr:⁴ He who forgets a single subject of his studies is considered by Scripture as having incurred guilt against his soul; for it is said,⁵ "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen." Possibly his study may have overmatched his strength, (what then?); but it is said,⁵ "And lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." Hence he is not worthy of death, except he deliberately lets it depart from his heart.

9. Rabbi Haninah,⁶ the son of Dosa,⁷ said: Whosoever's fear of sin takes precedence of his wisdom, his wisdom abides; but whosoever's wisdom takes precedence of his fear of sin, his wisdom does not abide. He also said: Whosoever's works exceed his wisdom, his wisdom abides; but whosoever's wisdom exceeds his works, his wisdom will not abide.

10a. He also said: With whomsoever the spirit of mankind is pleased, the Spirit of God is also pleased; but with whomsoever the spirit of mankind is not pleased, the Spirit of God is also not pleased.

10b. Rabbi Dosa,⁸ the son of Harchinas, said: Sleep in the morning,⁹ wine at noon,¹⁰ and puerile conversation and spending time at places where the ignorant sit, draw a man out of the world.

11. Rabbi Eleazar¹¹ Hammudai¹² said: He who profanes holy things, and observes not the holy days,¹³ and offends his neighbor in public, and sets at naught the covenant of our father Abraham,¹⁴ and gives explanations not in conformity with tradition, though he has in his favor a knowledge of the law and¹⁵ good works, he has no share in the world to come.¹⁶

12. Rabbi Ishmael¹⁷ said: Be humble before thy superior, gentle towards youth, and receive all men with joy.

13. Rabbi Aqiba said: Jest and frivolity train men for immorality. Tradition

¹ Generally regarded as father of Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Jacob. Another reading is Simeon.

² Dositheus.

³ Abbreviated from Jonathan.

⁴ Rabbi Meïr was a famous disciple of R. Aqiba. [Cf. Pick, art. *Meïr*, in McClintock & Strong.]

⁵ Deut. iv., 9.

⁶ Legend ascribes to him the power of miracles. Cf. *Berakhoth*, fol. 33, col. 1; *Thaanith*, fol. 24, col. 2. He lived at the time of Jochanan, the son of Saccai.

⁷ Abbreviated from Dositheus.

⁸ Cotemporary of Jochanan, the son of Saccai.

⁹ When the Shema is to be recited.

¹⁰ Not the use of wine itself is forbidden; but the fact that one sits at the wine, instead of working while it is day.

¹¹ He lived at the time of the Adrianic war.

¹² Of Modiim, a place situated two hours east of Lydda, often mentioned in the first book of the Maccabees.

¹³ מועדות already occurs in 2 Chron. viii., 13.

¹⁴ Jerus. *Pea*, i., 1, ערלה לו מושך לו ערלה. 1 Macc. i., 15, καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας καὶ ἀπέστρεψαν ἀπὸ τοῦ διαθήματος ἀγίας. [Reference is to those who, belonging to the Grecian party, were ashamed of circumcision.]

¹⁵ The words וְתוֹרָה, "a knowledge of the Law and," are not in the Cambridge codex.

¹⁶ Cf. Mishna, *Sanhedrin*, ch. x, where those are enumerated who have no share in the world to come.

¹⁷ Ishmael, a cotemporary of R. Aqiba and R. Tarphon.

is a fence for the law; giving tithes forms a fence for riches;¹ vows form a fence for abstinence; the fence for wisdom is silence.

14. He also said: Man is beloved, because he was created in the image (of God); a greater love was made known unto him, because he was created in the image;² for it is said,³ "That in the image of God made he man." Israel are beloved, because they are called children; the love was enhanced by it being made known to them that they were called the children of God; for it is said,⁴ "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." Israel are beloved, for to them was given a precious instrument;⁵ the love was enhanced by it being made known to them that a precious instrument was given to them, by which the world was created; for it is said,⁶ "For I give you good doctrine, forsake not my law."

15. Everything is foreseen,⁷ and free will is accorded, and the world is judged beneficently, and all according to the majority of works.

16. He used to say, Everything is given on pledge,⁸ and a net is spread over every living creature.⁹ The mart is open, and the merchant credits, and the ledger is open, and the hand writes down, and whoever desires to borrow, let him come and borrow, but the stewards¹⁰ make constantly¹¹ their daily rounds, and make man refund, whether he consents to or does not consent, and they have that on which they may support (their claim), and the verdict is a veracious verdict, and everything is prepared for the banquet.¹²

17. Rabbi Eleazar,¹³ the son of Azariah, said: Where there is no learning, there can be no proper behavior; where there is no behavior, there can be no learning; where there is no wisdom, there is no reverence; where there is no reverence, there is no wisdom. Where there is no prudence, there is no discretion; where there is no discretion, there is no prudence. Where there is no meal, there is no learning; where there is no learning, there is no meal. He used to say: To what is every one to be compared whose wisdom is in advance of his actions? To a tree whose branches are many, but whose roots are few,¹⁴ and the wind comes and uproots it and overturns it;¹⁵ for it is said,¹⁶ "And he shall be like the destitute one in a desert plain, and shall not see when good cometh; and he shall sit amongst the things parched up in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited." But to what may he be compared whose actions are in advance of his wisdom? To a tree whose branches are few, but its roots many; and though all the winds in the world come and blow at it, they cannot make it stir from its place; for it is

¹ Cf. *Sabbath*, fol. 119, col. 2, towards the midst: עֶשֶׂר בְּשִׁבְלִי שְׁתַּתְעֶשֶׂר [i. e., give tithes that thou mayest become rich.]

² The words "a greater love image" are wanting in ancient MSS. and editions, and are probably spurious.

³ Gen. ix., 6.

⁴ Deut. xiv., 1.

⁵ Here is meant "the Law."

⁶ Prov. iv., 2.

⁷ צִפּוּר used of the eyes of God, Prov. xv., 3. [Cf. Matt. x., 30; Heb. iv., 13.]

⁸ [Cf. Matt. xii., 36.]

⁹ [Cf. Heb. ix., 27.]

¹⁰ [πράκτωρ, Lk. xii., 58; ὑπηρέτης, Matt. v., 25.]

¹¹ תָּמִיד constantly like the biblical תָּמִיד. Cf. Dan. vi., 17, 21, בְּתָרִידָא.

¹² Cf. Rev. xix., 9, μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι.

¹³ President of the Sanhedrim at Jabneh, after the deposition of Gamaliel II.

¹⁴ [Cf. Matt. vii., 26.]

¹⁵ [Cf. Matt. vii., 27.]

¹⁶ Jer. xvii., 6.

said,¹ "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

18. Rabbi Eleazar Hisma said: Nesting² and the observance of the menses³ are important constitutions; astronomy and geometry are ornaments of wisdom.

¹ Jer. xvii., 8.

² קנין "nesting," a Talmudic treatise in the 5. order of the Mishna, treats of birds for sacrifices in accordance with Lev. v., 1-10.

³ נדה, a treatise of the 6. order of the Mishna. [It treats the subject of the menstruating woman, and occupies 145 pages of the Babylonian Talmud.]